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HILDA SCHULLER
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Dear Dr. Wiesel,

For years and years I have kept everything that happened to me to myself. I think, as a child, I was even ashamed of it. Why did all these things happen to me? Nobody around me had such a horrible story. My husband keeps telling me to forget it; it's been so long ago.
I was born in the time of the depression. We lived in Antwerp, Belgium. My father had no job. He read the Talmud, was very religious, naturally. We were very poor.
Antwerp was bombed May 13, 1940. I went to school that morning excited about my first swimming lesson. The teacher told us to go home and keep close to the buildings (I am finally writing things down before I forget too much)
My father's oldest son and daughter, both married left with one of my brothers. My other teenage brother carried a suitcase of food (cans and all) to the station when we decided to leave on the next Wednesday. I turned back to wave to my brother David, who was supposed to stay in Antwerp and said to myself "I will never see him again." I did not!
The train trip was a nightmare, seven days long, going toward France. At one time hundreds of us had to run out of the station because of the bombing in Tournay, Belgium. The domed ceiling of the train station was glass as usual in Europe. We didn't make it out soon enough. My father threw himself on my small brother

and me and cried out "Shema Yisroel etc. - My mother had taken her shoes off because of swelling and we lost her in the crowd. When the all-clear sounded, we went back as well as the others. I was crying: "I'm not leaving without my mother". Like a miracle we saw her ahead of us among the throng of people.

We arrived in a village in France. They gave us food and shelter. We couldn't stay there long so we went to Toulouse where my father could get in touch with the Jewish Organizations (I'm already forgetting). During our time there in a bare room, also one night in a truck, we found out my oldest sister had lost an arm in the bombing. I cried not realizing much worse was to come.

Somehow, I remember walking with my parents and little brother and a whole crowd of people to the outskirts of Toulouse. There "BRENS" we saw many wooden barracks. It was an internment camp. Needless to say, it was very bad. We slept on the wooden floor of the a cubicle. In the winter there was only mud outside to go to the "Dining room" barrack: a thin soup and a piece of bread. The barrack had one small pot-belly stove in the middle of the long building. Once the Red Cross or its equivalent came and gave us a bar of soap. What a relief! It reminds me of a bar of Ivory Soap, except it was broken off from a big lump and naturally very crude.

My father decided we couldn't stay there. We left in the middle

of the night. I don't know how we did it. There were German officers on the train, my father had a beard etc.. We went to another village, Varennes. The farmers made us welcome. They gave us food and a small stone house to live in (not only my hair had lice, also my body) It was good to be clean again!

But my father knew there was no future for us children. He was in touch with Rabbi Menachim Schneerson (the cousin of the Rebbe who died recently in Brooklyn). He told my father to take us to a boarding school outside Vichy, at Brout-Vernet "Chateau des Morelles" I had a good time there Some of us went to the school in the village to learn, while at our school we learned Hebrew and all the rituals were observed. I made good friends there and was sad to leave them when we learned the Rabbi had arranged for us to go to America.

We went to the Rabbi's Villa in the outside of Marseilles His son and daughter as well as his wife were there. We had a most peaceful and beautiful time there. There were some young men there, too, who gave us Hebrew lessons. We had food. The Ocean was in front of us and the pine-woods in the hills behind the house. It's one good memory.

Meanwhile, my parents were taken away to another internment camp "Recebedou". Somehow, it was arranged

for my small brother and me to go visit our parents in camp. before we left for America. We arrived in Toulouse where a Jewish-French family took us in for the night. We heard them whisper in the other room that their parents had been deported to Poland. Next day we left by bus for the camp. My parents were there as well as one of my brothers. No use to tell you about the condition, very little food etc.---
I found out my brother David who had taken us to the train station in Antwerp, was in a nearby work camp. All of a sudden, like in a movie, the inmates had to gather outside in the "courtyard" An order was given that many of them had to leave that same day. Naturally, my parents' name was among them. My dear mother kept moaning: "Why did this have to happened just today." We didn't know what was going to happen to them We had to leave earlier and waved goodbye to them behind the barbed wire. We were sure they were going to Poland.
In Marseilles we boarded a Portuguese ship "Nyassa" with a small number of Jewish Children among the large crowd.
Later on, I was told Rebbi Schneerson had paid Eichmann to let us leave.
We arrived in Oran, north Africa and went by train to Casablanca where we waited for our ship to take us to America. There were mines, I heard.
Finally, we arrived in Baltimore on Aug. 30, 1942. We

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had been living in steerage on the ship. But at least we were with our friends.

We were taken to a college campus in Pleasantville, N.Y. I got my first new dress in years. In the morning we came down to a table set with all kinds of cereals. I had never seen that before. I looked forward to a good life although very worried about my parents. It was such a sunny, (clean, white cottages) surroundings. I was with my friends!

Unfortunately, we were all dispersed to different areas in the States. My brother and I were taken to St Louis to a depressing and dismal home; a recent widow who had no smile on her face and had to work selling subscriptions door to door. That was done because I came from a poor home, I shouldn't get used to luxury (Today, I have the best of everything in material things) Needless to say, I was very depressed. I learned English very fast did well in school. The Child Care Agency who took care of me decided I should see a psychiatrist. In my young mind that meant I was not normal. I had never heard of that kind of doctor. They did want to do the best for me; so they sent me to a private school in Topeka, Kansas where I would go to see a doctor at the Menninger Clinic three times a week.

There's much more to tell but I met a young men. We were both in our teens. We married and have been married for over 50 years.

I inquired about my family right after the war. At that time

I was living with a lovely Christian family still in Topeka The husband was the state's corporation lawyer and his wife was very social. As well as their daughter my age, a smiling debutante, corn-fed and happy looking. I received ~~an~~ an answer from the Red Cross amid this lovely, social, sorority rushing, life:

Your 3 half-sisters, their husbands and children gone.
Your oldest half-brother's wife and 2 little girls gone
He was taken to Auschwitz, escaped in the night and is now living in Los Angeles, very successful business man who married his wife's sister. Spielberg has his story in Shoah? He saw his wife and two babies pushed into a cattle wagon never again to see them again
My two young Teenage brothers, Michael and David gone.
I don't want to ask how.
My parents were not taken to Poland. They were sent to "Rivesaltes" and then to "Gurs" till the end of the war. They finally could come to America in 1950. Ended up in Los Angeles where they lived till old age.

I did write down everything I experienced during the war years when ~~I~~ I come to America. It was published in France: "Ces Enfants qu'il fallait sauver" by Sabine Zeitoun. It's in french and more detailed

I hope this will alleviate me finally

Sincerely, Hilda Schuller